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SOME 'VOLUNTARY' TAXES OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE

The decline and fall of the Roman empire were due even more to internal weakness than to external attack. The invasions of the barbarians did no more than deal the death blows to a system which was already in the last stages of disease. Of that disease the most conspicuous feature was financial exhaustion. The Romans throughout their history displayed a disastrous ignorance of economic causes and effects: their financial system was unwise in its administration, without foresight in its exactions, and suicidal in its expenditure. The landed and propertied classes which should have proved the mainstay of the empire were sacrificed to the maintenance of an idle city proletariat: in the later empire the burdens imposed on the men of moderate fortune were increased in order to support an elaborate bureaucracy and to satisfy the desire for luxury and display of the emperors and their entourage. The result was a drying up of the sources of wealth, a decline in taxable material which was accompanied by an ever-increasing need of the resources to be acquired by taxation. The long continued wars caused a decline in prosperity - a depopulation and depoverishment which is remarked by all the writers of the

fourth century - while the expenses of these wars, added to the expenses of the court and the bureaucracy, necessitated the exploitation of the propertied classes to the last possible penny.

In all times and in many countries the pressure of financial need has driven autocratic monarchs to have recourse to extraordinary methods of raising money when the ordinary system of taxation does not suffice. One of these methods is the exaction of sums of money from their more prosperous subjects under the name of gifts, whereby a specious appearance of spontaneity is imposed on the results of coercion. The subjects cannot decline to offer the gifts, the donation of which is suggested to them, for fear of the displeasure of the monarch; they are sometimes the more ready to bestow them from the hope of a future reward in the shape of his favour or promotion. Such gifts are therefore a convenient extra means of supply for an impecunious or avaricious autocrat, and the student of history will find that this method has frequently been employed both in ancient and modern times: the 'benevolences' of Edward IV. and Henry VII., and the 'forced loans' of Charles I., in the history of modern England, are paralleled by the *aurum coronarium* and the *aurum oblatitium* of the emperors of ancient Rome.

The imposition of the *aurum coronarium* was a money-getting device handed down from the republican to the imperial period. Its origin is interesting and goes back to a very early custom

of the ancient world, the bestowal of a wreath as an honorary reward. The first introduction of this custom was apparently due to the Greek athletic festivals: it is not found in Homer; but the bestowal of a wreath of olive or bay was from their institution the reward of the victor in the Greek games. These wreaths were of course merely an honorary token of victory: they brought fame and glory but had no intrinsic value. It was not till a later period that the custom arose of making public donations of crowns of gold to victorious generals as a recognition of their policy. Examples of this latter practice, which developed in the course of time out of the earlier and simpler rewards, were the bestowal of crowns of gold on Brasidas by the Chalcidian cities to whom he brought deliverance from the yoke of Athens,⁽ⁱ⁾ and on Alexander by the Greek cities assembled in Congress at the Isthmus as a compliment on his conquest of the Persian empire.⁽ⁱⁱ⁾ The most famous instance of the offering of a golden crown to a statesman is of course that which was the subject of Demonthenes' speech 'De Corona', from which speech we find that the practice was common in Athens.

The Romans adopted the custom from the Greeks and carried it to further lengths, adding both to the variety of material and to the occasions for offering the crowns: for example, the corona

i. Thucydides IV. 121.

ii. Bury - History of Greece, p. 823. For the numerous and valuable crowns and gifts of money bestowed on Alexander by the members of the Persian empire themselves, v. Athenaeus XII. ch. 53 & 54.

civica of oak leaves, given for saving the life of a citizen, the corona rostrata made of gold in the form of the beaks of ships, ⁽ⁱ⁾ for naval exploits, and the corona triumphalis, which was bestowed on a victorious general and which was the origin of the gift known in later times as the aurum coronarium.

The corona triumphalis is thus described by Aulus Gellius, writing in the second century A.D.

'Triumphales coronae sunt aureae, quae imperatoribus ob honorem triumphi mittuntur. . . . Hae antiquitus e lauru erant, post fieri ex auro coeptae'; ⁽ⁱⁱ⁾ and by Festus -

'Triumphales coronae sunt, quae imperatori victori aureae praeferuntur, quae temporibus antiquis propter paupertatem laureae fuerunt.' ⁽ⁱⁱⁱ⁾

In the earlier and less splendid times of Roman history, the general wore a wreath of laurel or bay in his triumphal procession, and even in later days, when crowns of gold were bestowed on the victor by his army, or the people of Rome, or their allies, he still wore on his head the simple crown of leaves, the gold being too heavy to support, but a gold ^(iv) crown was held over his head by a slave, and others were carried in the procession.

When crowns of solid gold began to be used in the triumph they were subscribed for by the people of Rome, and presented

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- i. Virgil Aen. VIII. 662l. Tempora navati fulgent rostrata corona.
 - ii. Aulus Gellius, Noct. Att. V. 6.
 - iii. In the Excerpta of Paulus Diaconus, ed. Müller, p. 367.
 - iv. Juvenal X. 39.

by the general to Jupiter in his temple, as a thanksgiving for victory. As early as 438 B.C., according to Livy, ⁽ⁱ⁾ after the war with the Etruscans about Fidenae 'Dictator coronam auream libram pondo ex publica pecunia populi jussu in Capitolio Jovi donum posuit.' The custom of the presentation of crowns of gold to be retained by the general himself may perhaps have begun in Greece, the Greeks being already in the habit of making such valuable presentations to those whom they wished to honour; for the first reference to such a practice which we find in Livy occurs in connection with the triumph of Quinctus Flaminius in 194 B.C., of whose triumphal procession Livy writes 'Tertio die, coronae aureae, dona civitatum, translatae centum quattuordecim'. ⁽ⁱⁱ⁾

Cn. Manlius Volso received similar offerings after his settlement of Asia and victory over the Gauls in 188 B.C.; the allies were so grateful for the peace thus secured to them in Asia Minor that 'non gratulatum modo venerant, sed coronas etiam aureas pro suis quisque facultatibus attulerant'. ⁽ⁱⁱⁱ⁾ These crowns to the weight of two hundred and twenty pounds were carried ^(iv) in the triumph of Volso on his return to Rome in 187.

It appears from the passage about Volso that the golden crowns were offered voluntarily by the allies of Rome in gratitude for services rendered to them. But we may suspect that the

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- i. Livy IV. 20.
 - ii. Ibid. XXXIV. 52.
 - iii. Ibid. XXXVIII. 37.
 - iv. Ibid. XXXIX. 7.

desire to curry favour with the victor was not infrequently a motive, even when the gift was apparently quite voluntary; those who made the offering would be regarded with more favour than those who refrained. It is therefore not surprising to find that before long the Roman generals began to regard these presentations as a matter of course, and to demand as a right what should have been an offering of good will freely made in their honour. This enforcement of a voluntary gift by the Roman generals and proconsuls was apparently quite a regular thing in the time of Cicero; such an anomaly does not seem passing strange when we know from Cicero's letters that proconsuls did not hesitate to tax the provincials to provide for the erection of a statue or monument in their honour.⁽ⁱ⁾ The proconsuls who were capable of this absurd proceeding would not hesitate to enrich themselves by the extortion of golden crowns from the provincials, even when they had done nothing to deserve them, and so prevalent was this injustice by the Ciceronian period that a law was proposed by Caesar, and carried, that such offerings should not be made except when a triumph had been actually decreed to a general. This law is mentioned by Cicero in his speech against Piso; and here is found the first mention of the *aurum coronarium* as such.

'Mitto aurum coronarium Lex enim generi tui et decerni et te accipere vetabat, nisi decreto triumpho.'⁽ⁱⁱ⁾

i. Cicero, ad Quintum fratrem I. 1. 9.
 ii. Cicero. In Pisonem XXXVII. 90.

By this time evidently the custom had arisen of making contributions in the form of gold coins, as well as gold crowns, (perhaps ostensibly with the object of providing crowns), a transition made inevitable by the fact that the generals would of course always melt down the crowns into current coin. This money contribution, which took the place of the crowns, was known as the *aurum coronarium*. From this time onwards the terms *corona* and *aurum coronarium* seem interchangeable, and some confusion between the terms is caused.

Aulus Gellius, in his definition of '*coronae triumphales*' adds '*id vulgo dicitur aurum coronarium*', thus confusing the money with the crowns; a mistake which shows how entirely the money had taken the place of the crowns by his time.

Cicero is our authority for the fact that the transition had taken place in his own time in another passage also - in his speech '*On the Agrarian Law*', where he quotes from the law a passage which included the *aurum coronarium* among the regular gains of a victorious general together with the '*praeda*' and '*manubia*'.⁽¹⁾

Julius Caesar, though, by his law mentioned in Cicero's speech, he tried to check the exactions of the provincial governors in the matter of the *aurum coronarium*, did not scruple to avail himself of this convenient method of raising money to refill a treasury depleted by the expenses of the civil war.

1. Cicero. De Lege Agraria I. 21, 12 and II. 22, 59.

Dio Cassius asserts that after the battle of Zela, when returning home through Greece to Italy, he had recourse to every possible expedient for raising money -

καὶ στεφάνους ἐπὶ ταῖς νίκαις εὐχνοῦς καὶ παρὰ
τῶν δυνάστων τῶν τε βασιλείων χρυσοῦς ἔλαβε. (i)

And when he had returned to Italy he carried on the same process of money getting (πολλὰ ἡργυρολόγησε) exacting some under the name of gifts (ἐν δωρεαῖς μέρει), 'crowns and statues and such things, and some as loans, not only from individuals but from cities, giving this specious name to exactions of money'. (ii)
An exact parallel is here afforded to the practices both of Henry VII. and of Charles I. in our own history.

In the case of Julius Caesar the aurum coronarium was obviously exacted, not even ostensibly as a mere adornment of a triumph, but as a source of income to defray current expenses.

ἔλαβε μὲν γὰρ ὑπὲρ τοῦ δημοσίου τὰ οἰκεία δεδανημένα,
καὶ διὰ τοῦτο καὶ δανείζεσθαι (iii) He must have derived an enormous sum of money altogether from the offerings, for his triumph was adorned with 'two thousand, eight hundred and twenty-two crowns, whose weight amounted to twenty thousand, four hundred and fourteen pounds', (iv) all of which he of course melted down to fill his exchequer.

i. Dio Cassius XLII. 49.

ii. Ibid. XLII. 49.

iii. Ibid.

iv. Lipsius: De Magnitudine Romana, quoting from Appian.

Another instance of a case where the aurum coronarium was put to practical use, on this occasion a more obviously public use, occurs a little later, also recorded in the history of Dio Cassius. Cn. Domitius Calvinus, after defeating the Cerretani of Spain, was granted a triumph by Octavian in 34 B.C., though he had only been acting as the subordinate of the latter, and received from the Spanish provincials τὸ χρύσειον τὸ παρὰ τῶν πόλεων εἰς αὐτὰ εἰωθὸς δίδοσθαι, some of which he employed for his triumph, but the greater part he used to rebuild the Regia (the official residence of the pontifex maximus, afterwards transferred by Augustus to the vestal virgins), the original building having been lately destroyed by fire. ⁽ⁱ⁾

Octavian himself received these gifts of the coronary gold in great quantities on many occasions, a fact which can be attested from several sources. Virgil in the eighth book of the Aeneid speaks of gifts made to him at his triumph 'dona recognoscit ⁽ⁱⁱ⁾ populorum', and Servius, in his commentary on the passage, remarks 'aurum coronarium dicit, quod triumphantibus hodieque a ⁽ⁱⁱⁱ⁾ victis gentibus datur'. Servius here adds the statement 'Imponebant autem hoc imperatores propter concessam vitam,' which however does not appear to be correct, as Godefroy remarks in his commentary on the section of the Theodosian Code dealing with the aurum coronarium: the gifts were meant as a compliment

i. Dio Cass. XLVIII. 42.
 ii. Virg. Aen. VIII. 721.
 iii. Servius ad loc.

by friends and allies on a victory, not a ransom for the lives of the conquered, and they seem to have been offered not by those over whom the triumph was being celebrated, but by the provincials and the allied states and kings.

Apparently also prior to the time of Augustus it was the provincials and allies only who made the contributions; it does not appear that it was generally expected from the cities of Italy or from Rome. There are, however, exceptions to this rule - one being the case of Julius Caesar mentioned above, another, also mentioned by Dio Cassius, the case of Lucius Antonius. In 41 B.C., when Octavian was delayed by illness on his way to Rome, and Lucius Antonius, aided by his brother's wife, Fulvia, had usurped the reins of power in Rome, Antonius celebrated a triumph over some tribes in the Alps, though in the opinion of people generally he had done nothing to deserve such an honour, and boasted that in the splendour of his triumph he was greater than Marius - ἔπος ἐπίθῃ γὰρ ὅτι ἐκείνῳ μὲν ἢ τις ἢ οὐδὲν ἐτόφανος ἔδοθῃ, αὐτὸν δὲ ἄλλους τε καὶ παρὰ τοῦ δήμου κατὰ φωνὴν, ὃ μὴ δένοι τῶν προτέρων ἔγχεσθαι, διὰ τε τὴν Φουλσίαν καὶ διὰ τὰ χρήματα, ὃ ἁέθρα τισὶν ἀνάλωσεν, ἔλαβεν.¹

But in both these cases it is obvious that that was a departure from the usual custom, and that the exaction of crowns from Italy and Rome was regarded as an unprecedented procedure.

1. Dio Cass. XLVIII. 4.

Under Augustus, however, the practice of presenting the aurum coronarium was extended to the cities of Italy as well as the provinces. For we learn from Dio Cassius that Augustus in 29 B.C. at the time of his triumph, was offered the gold
 τὸ τοῖς στεφάνοις προσῆκον ----- παρὰ τῶν πόλεων τῶν ἐν τῇ Ἰταλίᾳ

but did not accept it, thereby gaining great popularity for himself.⁽ⁱ⁾ He himself takes credit for this in his written memorial of his own acts, the 'Res gestae Divi Augusti', where he says that though the municipia and coloniae of Italy contributed a large sum as aurum coronarium for his triumph, he remitted it, and this he did on each occasion when the offering was made.

'Auri coronario pondo triginta et quinque millia municipiis et coloniis Italiae conferentibus ad triumphos meos quintum consul remisi, et postea quotiescumque imperator appellatus sum aurum coronarium non accepi decernentibus municipiis et conferentibus plura atque antea decreverant'.⁽ⁱⁱ⁾

From the absence of any mention of remission to the provinces, we infer that Augustus accepted the aurum coronarium from them, and this was usual, so much so that Tertullian calls⁽ⁱⁱⁱ⁾ the triumphal crowns 'coronae provinciales'.

It was the easier for the Romans to make a practice of the acceptance of this voluntary tax, for such a custom was already widely spread in the Hellenistic world from the time of

1. Dio Cass. LI. 21.
 ii. Mon. Arc. IV. 26.
 iii. Tertullian: De Corona 13.

Alexander's conquests. Alexander himself was the recipient of many crowns from his eastern subjects, as well as the Greek world,⁽ⁱ⁾ and the Hellenistic kings continued the custom. There is ample evidence that the Ptolemaic kings developed the complimentary gifts of golden crowns made to them by their subjects into a regular tax, paid no longer in the form of a crown, but in money or in kind, though still retaining the name *στεφάνος*. Wilcken in his collection of Ostraka quotes several found in Egypt referring to this imposition of the Ptolemaic kingdom. From these we learn that the *στεφάνος* was nominally a voluntary contribution, like the aurum coronarium,⁽ⁱⁱ⁾ and known as *σύνταξις* not *φόρος*,⁽ⁱⁱⁱ⁾ that it was paid monthly (*εἰς τὸν τοῦ μηνὸς στεφάνον*^(iv)), and that it might be paid in corn as well as in gold.^(v) It also resembled the later development of the aurum coronarium, to be mentioned below, in the fact that it was paid only by a certain privileged class, the *ἐκτετακτοὶ* or *ἐκτετακτοὶ*, (*εἰς στεφάνον τῶν ἐκτετακτῶν*)^v

This imposition, which Augustus found already established in the Ptolemaic kingdom of Egypt, was by him transferred to his own treasury when Egypt had been annexed after Actium. This we learn from a Papyrus in the Berlin library recorded by Wilcken and dated 3 A.D. *στεφάνον τοῦ ἑμπροσθεν βασιλέως, οὐκ εἰς τὸν οἶκον ἀνακατασκευαζομένου*^(vi)

ii	Wilcken Ostraka	320.	i Athenaeus XII ch 53 + 52
iii	"	360.	
iv	"	1311.	
v	"	330.	
vi	"	110	

Several other Ostraka refer to the continued payment of the $\sigma\tau\acute{\rho}\alpha\nu\omicron\varsigma$ $\chi\rho\omicron\upsilon\sigma\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ under later emperors, such as Claudius, (i) and Aurelian; (ii) the Egyptian $\sigma\tau\acute{\rho}\alpha\nu\omicron\varsigma$ therefore became a part of the monies accruing to the Roman emperor's treasury as aurum coronarium, differing from the rest only in the regularity of its payment.

The passage quoted from the Monumentum Ancyranum shows what large amounts of gold accrued from the offering of the aurum coronarium to the fiscus (for, as gifts to the emperor himself, all such contributions were paid into his own treasury). Thirty-five thousand pounds' weight of gold was on this occasion contributed by the cities of Italy alone. It is obvious that an offering of this kind would form a welcome addition to the resources of the emperor. Emperors therefore who were extravagant and anxious to increase their income would seek occasion by all means for celebrating a triumph in order to have the aurum coronarium presented to them, while prudent and politic emperors were chary of making this exaction, owing to its peculiar character, which by this time had developed into something which was not a regular tax nor a voluntary offering, and so lacked the claims either of justice or of benevolence.

There are several references extant which show the practices of the different emperors in regard to this imposition. Dio Cassius in his account of the 'popular' actions of Tiberius, mentions that he did not accept money from anyone at his accession or triumph, and blamed Augustus for having done so. (iii) From

i. Wilcken Ostraka 376.
ii. " " 298.

iii. Dio Cass. LVII. 8.

this passage it may be inferred that the custom had already arisen, which we know to have prevailed in later times, of making the offering of the aurum coronarium at the emperor's accession (*περὶ τῆς νίκης ἑρχοῦ* Dio. Cass.) as well as at his triumph.

Of Claudius we are told by Dio Cassius that he forbade the money contributions to be made to him which had been made to Augustus and to Gaius.⁽ⁱ⁾ It may be that it is not the aurum coronarium which is here referred to, but another nominally voluntary contribution, the strena, a new year's offering to the emperor, instituted by Augustus and accepted by him from all the people,⁽ⁱⁱ⁾ abolished by Tiberius,⁽ⁱⁱⁱ⁾ but accepted by Gaius.^(iv) But there can be no doubt that Gaius, who, as Suetonius says, was so passionately fond of money that he wallowed in heaps of gold coin, and who, in order to swell his resources, imposed new taxes and debased the coinage, would not have hesitated to avail himself of the opportunity offered for acquiring more gold by receiving the aurum coronarium; and his ineffectual British expedition was probably undertaken in order to obtain the profits as well as the glory of a triumph.

With regard to Claudius, it is certain that he accepted the aurum coronarium from the provinces, though he may have remitted it, as well as the strena, to the people of Rome and Italy. For Pliny in his disquisition on the metal gold in his Natural History remarks

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- i. Dio Cass. LX. 6.
 - ii. Suet. Aug. 57.
 - iii. " Tib. 34.
 - iv. " Caligula, 42.

that Claudius when celebrating his triumph over the Britons, received a golden crown to the weight of seven thousand pounds from the province of Hispania Citerior, and one of the weight of 8000 pounds from Gallia Comata.

'Claudius, cum de Brittania triumpharet, inter coronas aureas VII pondo habere quam contulisset Hispania citerior, VIII quam Gallia Comata, titulis indicavit'.⁽ⁱ⁾

Apparently Claudius and the other more generous emperors made a practice of remitting the aurum coronarium to the Italian towns, while they accepted part at least from the provincials. This was the policy of Hadrian, 'aurum coronarium Italiae remisit, in provinciis minuit';⁽ⁱⁱ⁾ and of Antoninus Pius, 'aurum coronarium quod adoptionis suae causa oblatum fuerat, Italicis totum, medium provincialibus reddidit.'⁽ⁱⁱⁱ⁾

On the other hand, extravagant emperors seized at any pretext for a triumph in order to receive the aurum coronarium. The finances of Caracalla in general were marked by great extravagance and his chief motive in bestowing the citizenship on all the provincials is thought to have been the consequent increase of revenue.^(iv) It is not therefore surprising to find that he invented victories and celebrated mock triumphs so that he might exact the aurum coronarium; '. . . τῶν ἐστράτων τῶν χρυσῶν, οὓς ὡς καὶ πολεμίουσιν τινὰς ἐστὶ νικῶν πολλάκις ἤτε

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- i. Pliny, Nat. Hist. XXXIII. 3, 16, 52. (In regard to these crowns Tertullian's remark is very appropriate. De Corona 13: 'Sunt et provinciales aureae, imaginum jam non viro-
rum, capita majora quaerentes.')
 - ii. Spartian. Hadrian VI. 5.
 - iii. Capitolinus. Antoninus Pius, ch. 4.

Reference sld. have been made to the probable revival of the Egyptian or Egyptian by Cereculla & its probable abolition by Severus Alexander & the facts about the amount mentioned in the receipts. v. Hulse Egypt under Roman Rule p. 228. For the method of the collection v. ibid p. 10, 122 16.

'I do not mean' adds Dio Cassius, 'actual crowns, but the large sums of money given in their name, with which the cities are accustomed to crown the emperor.'⁽ⁱ⁾

The continual warfare of the third century was a great drain on the imperial exchequer - and no doubt any success in these wars was made the occasion of a triumph and the exaction of the aurum coronarium. But the only other references to it in the writers who deal with the period are concerned with Alexander Severus and with Probus, rulers whose moderation and good government form a pleasant exception to the muddle and misrule of the century. So in the case of Alexander Severus, Lampridius tells us 'aurum negotiatorum et coronarium Romae remisit'.⁽ⁱⁱ⁾ (This is the first mention of the city itself paying the aurum coronarium, though it may have been tacitly included hitherto in the cities of Italy.)

Of Probus we read in a letter of his to the senate⁽ⁱⁱⁱ⁾ chronicled by Vopiscus that he sends them the golden crowns which he has received from the cities of Gaul as a token of gratitude for his victories over the barbarians on their frontiers. 'Coronas quas mihi obtulerant omnes Galliae civitates aureas, vestrae P. C. clementiae dedicavi.'

i. Dio Cass. LXXVII. 9.

ii. Lampridius, Alex. Severus, c. 32. There is extant an edict of Alexander Severus mentioned in the Berliner Philologische Wochenschrift XXI. 781, and found in Egypt, remitting the aurum coronarium in Italy and the whole empire.

iii. Vopiscus, Probus, ch. XV.

The fullest evidence concerning the aurum coronarium in its latest developments is contained in the laws affecting it in the Theodosian Code. By means of these we can trace its progression in the fourth century down to the time of the second Theodosius, who published the Code in 438 A.D. In this Code (i) there are six laws under the heading 'De Auro Coronario'.

The first is a constitution of Julian dated 362 A.D. and addressed to the pretorian prefect.

"Aurum coronarium munus est voluntatis, quod non solum senatoribus, sed ne aliis quidem debet indici, licet quaedam indictionum necessitas postulaverit: sed nostro arbitrio reservari oportebit."

This law points out plainly that the aurum coronarium is still to be considered as a voluntary gift, not a tax. (In this connection it may be noted that Suidas remarks that the word $\epsilon\tau\epsilon\phi\alpha\nu\iota\kappa\omicron\nu$ was used by Greek-speaking Galateans to denote $\pi\acute{\alpha}\nu \tau\omicron \acute{\epsilon}\nu \chi\acute{\epsilon}\rho\iota\tau\omicron\varsigma \lambda\omicron\gamma\omega \delta\iota\delta\omicron\mu\epsilon\nu\omicron\nu$ (ii).

Moreover, the aurum coronarium is a gift the acceptance of which is reserved for the emperor alone: it is not a tax which may be levied by the officials of the treasury in order to meet some necessity. It apparently had been so levied on some occasions

i. Codex Theodosianus XII. 13, 1-6.

ii. The people of Galatea probably, as he suggests, got this word directly from the Rhodians, who were autonomous at first and paid no tax, but sent a small sum to Rome every year, $\omega\varsigma \omicron\upsilon \phi\omicron\rho\omicron\nu \eta\gamma\epsilon\rho\omicron\varsigma \mu\epsilon\lambda\lambda\omicron\nu \eta \epsilon\tau\epsilon\phi\alpha\nu\omicron\nu \phi\iota\lambda\omicron\iota\varsigma \delta\iota\delta\omicron\nu\tau\epsilon\varsigma$. This is another instance of the prevalence of the $\epsilon\tau\epsilon\phi\alpha\nu\omicron\varsigma$ as a voluntary gift in the Hellenistic world. Conspicuous

xviii

The passage in Libanius Or. Fun. p. 586 R (p. 320 Forst.) should have been considered here in ref. to Julian. Libanius definitely that Julian fixed the weight of the crown at 70 staters

in the past, and Julian by this law forbids this and asserts its voluntary character, and his own as the sole authority connected with it. From Ammianus Marcellinus we know that Julian, among other liberal acts, remitted the aurum coronarium (i) and this law is intended to prevent its unjust exaction.

Next follow two laws of Valentinian and Valens which declare who is liable for the payment of the aurum coronarium. The first is as follows:-

'Universi quos senatorii nominis dignitas non tuetur ad auri coronarii praestationem vocentur, exceptis his quos lex praeterita ab hac conlatione absolvit. Omnes igitur possessores, aut inter Decuriones coronarium aurum, aut inter (ii) senatores glebalem praestationem deinceps recognoscant'.

The next declares more emphatically -

'Nullus, exceptis curialibus, quos pro substantia sui aurum coronarium offerre convenit, ad oblationem hanc adtineatur.'

By this time therefore the aurum coronarium had become a special payment confined to the decurions, the members of the curia or local senate in the municipia. These decurions, the middle class proprietors of the empire, who should have been the 'nervi reipublicae ac viscera civitatum', as they are called (iii) by Marjorian, were subjected to increasingly heavy burdens

i. Amm. Marcell. Bk. 25 ch.4. Liberalitatis ejus testimonia plurima sunt et verissima, inter quae indicta sunt tributorum admodum levia, coronarium indultum, remissa debita multa diurnitate congesta.

under the later emperors, and their rapid decline was one of the chief and most disastrous features of the decline of the empire. For they not only had to pay the land tax to which all proprietors were liable, but they were, by a system similar to that of the symmories of Athens, held accountable for the collection of that tax from the district of which their town was the centre, and had to make good any deficiency in the amount. By what process it had come about that the aurum coronarium had been added to the special burdens of that unfortunate class we are ignorant.

The *lex praeterita*, of which mention is made, '*nullibi extat*', as Godefroy, the commentator on the Code, remarks; so we are ignorant of the circumstances which gave exemption to a few of the decurions from the aurum coronarium, but we see from this law and from other sources that the senatorial class were not liable, having however special exactions of their own to meet.

There follows a law of Theodosius the Great, together with Gratian and Valentinian II. who at this time (379 A.D.) were joint rulers of the Western Empire. This law gives the occasions on which the aurum coronarium was to be offered.

"*Quae diversarum ordines curiarum, vel amore proprio, vel indulgentiarum laetitia, vel rebus prospere gestis admoniti, in coronis aureis signisque diversis obtulerint, in quacumque fuerint oblata materia, in ea suscipiantur: ne id quod voluntate offertur, occasione obryzae incrementi necessitatis injuria insequatur.*"

The number of occasions on which the aurum coronarium was customarily offered had therefore by this time increased.

There were three causes which might call forth this gift to the emperor: (1) amore proprio, as a token of especial affection;

(2) indulgentiarum laetitiae - as a token of gratitude for some remission of taxes or other favour granted; (3) rebus prospere gestis - as a token of congratulation on a success in battle or some other fortunate event.

Godefroy in his commentary on this law mentions examples of each of these occasions of offering the aurum coronarium.

Of the first (amore proprio) he says that the provincials testified their affection on various occasions, as :- (1) the announcement of the accession of an emperor, where he instances the offering made to Julian *μετὰ τὴν τῆς βασιλείας ἀναγόρευσιν* and also on a similar occasion to Valentinian *Υαλεντινιανού ἀνάβρῃς ἐν Νικαίᾳ τῆς βιθυνίας γίγνεται, πρεσβείαι τε ὅσαι συνσπεροῖται ἐπὶ τοῦτο τοὺς χρυσοὺς ἔχουσαι σταφάνους πρὸς ἑκείνον ἀναφέροντο.*

In these passages he is quoting Eunapius.¹

(2) On the occasion of the adoption of an heir to the empire, as in the case of Antoninus Pius, for which Capitolinus in the passage quoted above, is his authority.

(3) On the occasion of a visit of the Emperor to some town, as, for example (according to Zosimus) it was offered to Julian by the people of Edessa when he visited their district. (ii)

i. Eunapius Excerpta de Legationibus.

ii. Zosimus: History V. 4.

Another instance, given by Ammianus Marcellinus, occurred in the case of Jovian. When he visited Nisibis after his disgraceful treaty with the Persians, by which much territory was surrendered, including that city without its inhabitants, the people of Nisibis offered him a crown, obviously because it was customary, and not really *amore proprio*, as he had just lost them their city: for Silvanus, the man who formally offered the crown, did so with the words '*Ita imperator a civitatibus residuis coroneris*',⁽¹⁾ at which Jovian was naturally '*exasperatus*'.

(4) On the occasion of the sending of an embassy to the emperor from a city to ask some favour: for example, Synesius in his '*De Regno*' mentions that he was sent by the people of Cyrene as an ambassador to Arcadius with this message - 'ἔμει
601 πέμπει Κυρήνην στεφανώσοντα χρύσῳ ὑπὸ
τὴν κεφαλὴν, φιλοσοφίᾳ δὲ τὴν ψυχὴν',
to ask help for Cyrene in some calamity which had befallen it, and the people of Tripoli sent a similar embassy to Valentinian '*Tripolitani . . . Severum et Flavianum creavere legatos, victoriarum aurea simulacra Valentiniano ob imperii primitias*
oblaturus, utique lacrimosas provinciae ^{ruinas} ~~ruinas~~ docerent intrepide'.⁽¹⁾

The second cause was '*ob indulgentiarum laetitiam*'; that is to say - when the emperor granted remittance to a city of the rest of its taxes, the *aurum coronarium* was offered him instead out of gratitude. Of such an occasion Godefroy could find no example, but this law is evidence for the existence of the practice.

i. Amm. Marcell. Bk 25 ch. 9

ii. Amm. Marcell. Bk 28, ch. 6. The '*ruina*' was due to depredations of neighbouring barbarians.

Thirdly, the aurum coronarium was offered 'ob res prospere gestas', for victories over enemies. This was the earliest and original cause of the offering, of which many instances have already been given, and to which the law of Caesar, mentioned by Cicero in his speech against Piso, refers.

Another circumstance with regard to the aurum coronarium to be gathered from this law is the fact that it was offered not only in the form of golden crowns, and of coins of gold, but also 'in signis diversis' in the shape of other figures of gold. Such, for example, were the figures of Victory offered to Valentinian, referred to above, 'victoriarum aurea simulacra'.

In whatever form the gold was offered, it was to be accepted, according to this law, and no over-close scrutiny was to be made into the material of which it was composed 'ne id quod voluntate offertur, occasione obryzae incrementi necessitatis injuria insequatur.'

Obryza or obryzum is thus defined by Godefroy:- Obryzum igitur aurum perpurgatum purum quod saepius despumavit, et incoctum est.

The meaning of this passage therefore is that even if the gold offered was not pure standard gold, it was not on that account to be refused, or in other words, as Godefroy remarks, 'Donato equo in os ejus inspiciendum non est.'

The fifth law of the series, also issued by the emperors Valentinian and Theodosius, and dated 384, was intended to check illegal exaction of the aurum coronarium. 'Ad conlationem auri coronarii placuit neminem absque consuetudine esse cogendum.'

The 'consuetudo' is explained by the preceding law, which gives the occasions on which it was the custom to offer the aurum coronarium.

By this enactment and the preceding announcement that the gold was not to be scrutinised or rejected for imperfection, are illustrated the moderation of Theodosius in financial matters, a moderation which was wise in regard to the disastrous strain on the resources of the decurions, which was gradually exhausting that class. The same moderation was displayed by Justinian ⁽ⁱ⁾ in whose code the above law reappears; - a proof that the offering of the aurum coronarium continued in practice in the eastern, after the extinction of the western empire.

The sixth law under the heading 'De Auro Coronario' remains to be quoted, but it refers to another form of the aurum coronarium and must be separately considered.

One more fact with regard to the form of the aurum coronarium under discussion can be gathered from the Theodosian Code, namely, that special embassies were sent to the emperor to convey it on behalf of the decurions. In the section of the Code 'De Legatis' there is a law of the emperors Honorius and Theodosius ⁽ⁱⁱ⁾ dated 416, and addressed to the pretorian prefect, which runs as follows:-

'Quotiens Legatio destinatur, universos curiales praecipimus, qui intra urbem consistunt . . . in locum Curiae convenire, et

i. Codex Justinianus X. 74.

ii. " Theod. XII. 12, 15.

decreta sua propria subscriptione formata Viro Spectabili Praefecto Augustali insinuare, ut ejus relatione Tuis Virtutibus intimata et sub examine tuo perpensa, venire necne Legati debeant ordinetur; . . . et auro coronarii non (sicut nuper factum est) ab his colligendo qui venditis honoribus, ut ad gradus altiores venirent, coemerunt; quos quidem recepta summa quam dederunt, universi munia patriae implere praecipimus, sed a curia omni praestanda; vindicta hujus facinoris Tuae Sublimitati permissa.'

From this law it is obvious that the aurum coronarium was brought to the emperor by legates specially appointed by the Curia of the city, a fact which is also attested by Ammianus Marcellinus in the case of the offering made to Valentinian by the people of Tripoli;⁽ⁱ⁾ also that the aurum coronarium was voted, contributed and collected by the whole body of curials.

We may further observe that the custom had arisen of collecting the aurum coronarium by means of the sale of higher rank to the decurions; a practice which would defeat the object of the aurum coronarium; for a decurion raised by this means to the rank of a senator would obtain immunity from the many burdens of the decurion's position, including the aurum coronarium itself. This escape from the position of a decurion it was the emperor's desire to prevent, both in this and other ways, and enactments may be found in the section of the Code dealing with the decurions, which forbid a decurion

i. q.v. supra.

by any means to escape from his position, and bind him down by what is practically a caste system to an office which had become hereditary. This was one of the most ominous signs of the decay of the empire; the curials who should have been the strength of the state were diminishing in wealth owing to the ever-increasing burden of obligations heaped on their shoulders, in power, owing to the increased centralisation of government, and in numbers, owing to their financial ruin and their attempts by any means to escape from a position which was becoming more and more an 'onus' and less and less a 'munus'. 'The flight of the curials is as momentous as the coming of the
(i)
Goths'.

Of this ruin and this flight one of the contributory causes was the burden of the aurum coronarium.

forms of the
aurum coronarium

Besides this special imposition on the decurions, there are two other exactions mentioned in the Theodosian Code under the name of the aurum coronarium. Godefroy in his 'Paratitlon' to the section notes this fact:- 'aurum coronarium in triplici genere reperio', the first being the congratulatory offering to the emperor hitherto discussed; while under the heading of the second he remarks: 'Satrapae quoque, veluti Sofanenae aurum coronarium seu coronam Imperatoribus Romanis pro devotione quam debebant Imperio Romano solemniter offerre
(ii)
tenebantur.'

This species of aurum coronarium is treated of in the sixth law of the chapter of the Code 'De Auro Coronario' -

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- i. Dill. Last Century of the Western Empire.
 - ii. Cod. Theod. XII. 13, 6.

which is a constitution of the emperors Valentinian II. and Theodosius dated 387, and addressed to the satrap of Sophene:-

'Aurum Coronarium his reddi restituique recernimus, quibus inlicite videtur ablatum, ut secundum consuetudinem moris antiqui omnes Satrapae, pro devotione quae Romano debetur Imperio, coronam ex propriis facultatibus faciant serenitati nostrae solemniter offerendam.'

From this law it appears that even in the time of Theodosius the Roman Empire retained in its system the old Persian name and office of satrap. This was probably the case only in those districts which formed a bone of contention between the Persian and Roman power in the later empire, and so were not definitely and permanently a part of the empire. The district of Armenia had been surrendered by Jovian to the Persian power, formed into a Persian province, and administered by a Persian satrap in 367 A.D.,⁽ⁱ⁾ but had soon lapsed into a position of semi-independence under the native king, Para, who professed friendliness to the Roman power. After his death it had apparently been recovered partially at least into the Roman empire, for Sophene was, according to the above law, administered by a satrap for Rome, in 387.

By this law as by the two preceding it in the Code, the moderation of Theodosius is illustrated, for he enacts that the aurum coronarium shall not be compulsorily collected as a

i. Gibbon, ed. Bury, Vol. III. 52 ff.

tax from the satraps, but that it is to be a voluntary, not a compulsory, offering of the satraps themselves according to their means, and all such sums as have been illegally exacted are to be restored to them. This form of the aurum coronarium was therefore similar to the offering of the decurions in being a voluntary gift, offered 'pro devotione', as the decurions offered it 'amore proprio'. But the use of the word 'solemniter' seems to imply that it was offered regularly, perhaps annually, as though it were a tax (though Theodosius declares it is not to be so considered) whereas the gift of the decurions was only made on special occasions, such as the accession or the victory of an emperor.

There is no evidence as to the reason or origin of this offering of the satraps, nor as to the date when the practice arose; but that it had been in vogue for some considerable period by the date of this law may be inferred from the use of the phrase 'secundum consuetudinem moris antiqui.'

The third form of the aurum coronarium was an imposition which the Jews who wished to continue to live under their own laws after the fall of Jerusalem used to pay to the patriarch for the expenses of the Temple instead of the didrachm previously paid to him, which was now transferred to the Roman treasury.

To this contribution to the patriarch the following law of the Theodosian Code refers:-
(1)

1. Cod. Theod. XVI. (De Judaeis), 8.

'Superstitionis indignae est ut archisynagogi sive Presbyteri Judaeorum, vel quos ipsi Apostolos vocant, qui ad exigendum aurum adque argentum a Patriarcha certo tempore diriguntur, a singulis synagogis exactam summam adque susceptam ad eundem reportent. Quae de re omne quidquid considerate temporis ratione confidimus esse collectum, fideliter ad nostrum dirigatur aerarium. . . . '

This law of the emperors Arcadius and Honorius dated 399 forbids the aurum coronarium ⁽ⁱ⁾ to be offered to the patriarchs to the Jews as had been the custom, but enacts that the Jews are to pay all such contributions into the imperial treasury. Another law, however, dated five years later, cancels the order, which must have been extremely unpopular with the Jews.

'Dudum jusseramus ut ea quae Patriarchae a Judaeis istarum partium ex consuetudine praebentur, minime praeberentur. Verum nunc amota prima jussione . . . Cunctos scire volumus Judaeis mittendi copiam a nostra clementia esse concessam'. ⁽ⁱⁱ⁾

But by the time of Theodosius the Younger and Valentinian III., patriarchs had ceased to be nominated by the Jews, ⁽ⁱⁱⁱ⁾ and a law was issued in 426, again and finally transferring the aurum coronarium to the imperial treasury under the name of the canon anniversarius.

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- i. Goth. Comm. Hac lege Honorius Imp. . . . collationem auri coronarii . . . submovet.
 - ii. Cod. Theod. XVI. 14.
 - iii. Baudi de Vesme. Des Impositions dans la Gaule, par.63.

'Judaeorum primates qui in utriusque Palestinae synedriis nominantur vel in aliis provinciis degunt, periculo suo anniversarium canonem de synagogis omnibus palatinis compellentibus exigant ad eam formam, quam patriarchae quondam coronarii auri nomine postulabant, et hoc quod de occidentalibus partibus patriarchis conferri consueverat, nostris largitionibus inferatur.' (iii)

This form of aurum coronarium, though it has the same name, differs entirely from the other two in being a compulsory annual tax, without the pretence of being a voluntary complimentary gift; and it must be merely a coincidence that it has the same name.

The Aurum Oblatitium. Next to the aurum coronarium among the voluntary taxes of the Roman empire should be mentioned the aurum oblatitium, - an imposition which appears to have been intended as a compensation to the treasury for the exemption of the senatorial class from the aurum coronarium, and which is in almost every respect similar to the latter. It also, as the aurum coronarium, was nominally a voluntary contribution, but in fact obligatory; it also was presented on occasions of rejoicing as a congratulation to the emperor; and it also was a class tax, a tax imposed only on the senatorial, as the aurum coronarium was on the curial class - a peculiarity which illustrates the growth of the caste system in the later Roman empire.

The senatorial dignity in the later empire did not at all imply the exercise of senatorial functions. It had become

merely a mark of social standing, and implied the possession of some office by the senatorial himself or his ancestors. The possession of this dignity brought with it some exemptions, notably from municipal burdens, (a fact which caused it to be sought after by the decurions); it also imposed some burdens peculiar to itself, among which was the aurum oblatitium.

The origin of the aurum oblatitium as of the aurum coronarium was probably the spontaneous presentation of gifts, as a token of congratulation on the occasion of notable and auspicious events, in this case by the senate to the emperor. These gifts became in course of time forced and obligatory payments on certain specific occasions.

Evidence and particulars regarding this imposition are found in the section of the Theodosian Code 'De Senatoribus', and in the letters of Symmachus.

(i)

Three laws in the Code deal with the aurum oblatitium. The first declared where it was to be paid and by whom it was to be exacted, and was issued by the emperors Arcadius and Honorius in the year 395.

'Omnes senatores qui in sacratissima urbe consistunt, licet habeant per longinquas provincias atque diversas possessiones aurum oblatitium in urbe persolvant, quod a procuratoribus et actoribus suis ad urbem reditus perferuntur.'

i. Cod. Theod. VI. 2: 5, 9, 14.

Sane his senatoribus qui in provinciis larem foveant, per (i)
 provincias, censuales qui plenam habent notitiam, immineant,
 quo cognoscant sine dilatione aurum profuturum aerario nostro
 quantocius inferendum.'

This law makes it plain that the payment of the aurum oblatitium was imposed on all the senators and on them alone, and shows that it was collected as though it were a tax by the census officials.

The second law referred to merely provides for the assistance of these census officials by the ordinary magistrates, since the former were not sufficient for the task.

The third is a decree of Valentinian III. dated 426 and addressed to the senators, remitting the payment of the aurum oblatitium.

'Oblationem nobis amplissimi ordinis prompta liberalitate promissam, partim remittimus vobis, partim patriae communi urbique largimur.'

(ii)

There was a special reason for this remission. The offering was on this occasion intended as a congratulation to the emperor on the death of the 'tyrant' John, and the recovery of Rome by Valentinian, then a child seven years old. John had been the primicerius or principal secretary of the late emperor, Honorius, and on the death of the latter had attempted to usurp the imperial power, hoping to secure the aid of the

i. = imponent.

ii. Goth. Comm. on Cod. Theod. VI. 2, 14.

Huns; but he had failed owing to their refusal to help him, and was put to death by Placidia, Valentinian's mother. The disturbance and the expenses of the war with John must have caused some pecuniary loss to the city of Rome, and this remission of part of the aurum oblatitium and gift of the other part to the city was granted by the emperor's generosity as compensation, in order also to ^{obtain} ~~secure~~ for him the popularity necessary to secure the throne. The announcement embodied in this decree was made in a 'somewhat prolix' ⁽ⁱ⁾ speech delivered on behalf of the emperor by his secretary in the senate.

Incidentally this passage is evidence of the sort of occasion which might call forth the offering of the aurum oblatitium; for example, congratulation on a victory. For the other occasions on which it was offered a letter of ⁽ⁱⁱ⁾ Symmachus is evidence. On behalf of the Senate, of which he was the most prominent member, he offered to Valentinian II. the aurum oblatitium on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of his succession (i.e. in 385), accompanied by a letter which well illustrates the ostensibly voluntary character of the aurum oblatitium and refers to other occasions on which it was offered. The following is the most important passage of this letter:-

... Senatus tamen promptus obsequi, omnes officiorum partes ultro arripit quibus indicatur affectio, et salutare numen tuum precatur ut in hac oblatione, quae nonnihil

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- i. Goth. ad loc.
 - ii. Symmach. Ep. X. 33.

superioribus addidit, intelligas hoc esse curatum ne sub te minus posse videamur. Nam divis parentibus tuis ob decennium a singulis minor summa decreta est. Etiam divus frater mansuetudinis vestrae cum tertium lustrum aevi imperialis exigeretur, parcioze munificentia honoratus asseritur. Nunc in amorem tuum studia nostra creverunt. Nam mille sexcentas auri libras decennialibus imperii tui fastis devotus ordo promisit. . . Ergo et hunc liberis sume sacro aerario decreta subsidia, et futuris processibus imperii tui obsequiorum similium spem reserva.'

The occasions then on which the aurum oblatitium was customarily offered were not only after a victory, as noted above, but also on certain anniversaries of the emperor's accession, such as the fifth, tenth and fifteenth.

It also appears from this letter what large sums were acquired by the emperors as aurum oblatitium, reaching in this case to the amount of sixteen thousand pounds weight of gold, or about £6400.

Another point to be remarked is that the aurum oblatitium, as the aurum coronarium, was in theory regarded as a spontaneous token of affection 'quibus indicatur affectio'. Nevertheless it had in fact become an exaction, to be paid whether the senators were willing or not. This is shown very plainly by another letter of Symmachus, (i) in which he records the consternation created in the senate on another occasion by the demand of the emperor's treasurer for an oblatio larger than the senators could afford.

'Praefecti litterae ruperunt otium meum; . . . oblationem faciendam . . . indicavit. Quantitas postulatae rei excessit opulentiam recognitam. Vastum silentium cunctis stupor subitus imperavit.'

Though the imposition is here as elsewhere referred to as an oblatio, yet the word 'postulare' might reasonably be employed in connection with it, for it was an offering not of free will but of necessity. The use of the word 'oblatio' both in the Theodosian Code and in the letters of Symmachus has led to a confusion in some writers between this offering and other burdens peculiar to the senatorial class. The aurum oblatitium must not be confounded with the oblatio votorum, another name for the strenua, the new year's offering instituted by Augustus, which had by this time become restricted to the senatorial class. It must also be distinguished from the land tax known as the glebalis collatio or the follis, another imposition peculiar to the senators.

The glebalis collatio was an ordinary tax imposed annually to which all senatorial land-owners, including the emperor himself, were liable, while the aurum oblatitium was a sub-
(i)
scription or gift made not regularly but on special occasions.

~~These two~~ peculiar burdens of the senatorial class - ~~the oblatio votorum~~ and the glebalis collatio, ^{was} ~~were~~ abolished by the reforming policy of Marcian in a decree addressed to the
(ii)
senate which appears in the Code of Justinian.

i. Goth. Comm. on Cod. Theod. VI. 2, 5.

ii. Cod. Just. XII. 2, 2.

'Glebam vel follem sive septem solidorum functionem sive quamlibet ejusmodi collationem tam circa personas quam circa praedia funditus jubemus aboleri, ut omnes hujus modi sopita perpetuo conquiescat exactio.'

That the aurum oblatitium was included in the 'quamlibet ejusmodi collationem' here abolished is rendered probable by the fact that no mention of this offering appears in the Code of Justinian. The aurum coronarium, on the other hand, does make its reappearance in that Code, and we may therefore infer that it continued unrevoked till the extinction of the eastern empire.

The Strena. Another offering which may be reckoned among the voluntary taxes of the Roman empire was the strena, an imposition apparently of less importance and less value than the aurum coronarium and aurum oblatitium, but still a frequent and regular offering and an additional means of obtaining income of which some emperors were glad to avail themselves. The strena resembles the two previously mentioned impositions in taking its origin from the custom of presenting complimentary gifts, in this case new year gifts.

The origin of the word strena is lost in obscurity: various conjectures have been made, but none have been certainly confirmed. The Romans themselves, who were too apt to base their etymology on a surface resemblance of words, connected it with the word 'strenuus'. Symmachus thus explains it 'nomen (i) indicio est viris strenuis haec convenire ob virtutem.'

i. Symmachus. Epist. X. 35.

(i)

Others think that it is a Sabine word similar in meaning to the Latin 'sanitas', and some colour is given to this assumption by the fact that in very early times a connection was thought to exist between this word and the worship of the goddess Strenia, the personification of health, the Sabine equivalent of the Latin Salus. This goddess had a grove in the city near the Coliseum.^x The cult was according to tradition established by the Sabine king, Titus Tatius, to whom branches of the sacred trees of the grove were presented at the New Year.

"Ab exortu paene urbis Martiae strenarum usus adolevit, auctoritate Tatii regis, qui verbenas felicis arboris ex luco Streniae anni novi auspices primus accepit."(ii)

Thus according to Symmachus the custom arose of making presents to bring good luck at the new year 'anni novi auspices', a custom which became universal in the Roman world, and which is equivalent to our custom of wishing a 'happy New Year'. The result was that the original significance of the word was lost and the word 'strena' came to mean 'bonum omen', in which sense we find it used in Plautus:

"Auspiciod hodie optumo exivi foras

.

Cum strenad obscaevavit".(iii)

"Bona scaeva strenaque obviam occessit mihi."(iv)

Later, however, it seems to have been confined to the special

i. Daremberg & Saglio. Lewis & Short. x Preller. Roman Mythology
 ii. Symmachus X. 35. Article Strenia
 iii. Plautus Stichus III. 2, 8.
 iv. " " V. 2, 24.

sense of a gift on a festival day, and especially on New Year's Day, and thus the word is defined by Festus "Strenam vocamus, quae
(i)
datur die religioso omnibus boni gratia."

These gifts of good omen were at first branches of trees, such as the olive or laurel, thus maintaining the religious association; later, fruits, such as dates or figs, or honey was given as symbolical of the plenty, prosperity and happiness that were wished by the donor for the recipient. Then representations of these in metal, on lamps or metal discs, apparently took their place in some cases at least: for example, there is in existence a disc given to Commodus with such objects represented on it - a leaf, a fig, a coin, ~~etc.~~ and round it the inscription 'annum novum faustum felicem felici imperatori.'
(ii) Finally, gifts of small coins, of real value as well as symbolic value, became the most frequent form of offering. Ovid is our evidence for the various forms the strena took, and for their significance.

"Quid vult palma sibi negosaque carica, dixi,

Et data sub niveo candida mella cado?

Omen, ait, causa est, ut res sapor ille sequatur,

Et peragat coeptum dulcis ut annus iter.

Dulcia cur dentur, video; stipis adice causam,

Pars mihi de festo ne labet ulla tuo.

(cont.)

i. Festus. ed. Müller, p. 313.

ii. See Daremberg & Saglio under 'strena'.

Risit, et, O quam te fallunt tua saecula, dixit,

Qui stipe mel sumpta dulcius esse putes!

Vix ego Saturno quemquam regnante videbam, (i)

Cuius non animo dulcia lucra forent."

It was natural that those who wished to curry favour with great and powerful men should take advantage of this custom, and appear at their houses each Kalends of January with such complimentary gifts. Still more so would this be the case with regard to the emperors, from the time of the inception of the empire. And so we find that Augustus received from all the people of Rome gifts of small silver pieces as strenae on the first of January. A special decree of the Senate legalised (ii) the bestowal of these gifts on the emperor, an authorisation which would go a long way towards making them compulsory. Dio Cassius and Suetonius both give accounts of the presentation of the strenae to Augustus.

Ἐπειδὴ τε ἀργυρίον εὐθὺς εἰς εἰκόνας αὐτοῦ καὶ ἑκείνη (sc ἡ βουλὴ) καὶ ὁ δῆμος συνεστήνεγκαν, αὐτοῦ μὲν δοδεκάτην, ὕψιστος δὲ δημοσίᾳ καὶ προσέτι καὶ Ὀμονοίᾳ, Ἐιρήνῃ τε, ἔστησαν. αἰεὶ τε γὰρ ὡς εἴπειν καὶ ἐπὶ πάσῃ προφάσει τούτ' ἐποιδοῦν· καὶ τέλος καὶ ἐν αὐτῇ τῇ πρώτῃ τοῦ ἔτους ἡμέρᾳ οὐκ ἔτι ἰδίᾳ, που κατέβαλλον αὐτὸ ἀλλ' αὐτῷ ἑκείνῳ προσιόντες, οἱ μὲν πλείον, οἱ δὲ ἥλαττον ἐδίδουσαν. καὶ ὅς, προσθεὶς ἕτερον τοσούτον ἢ καὶ πλέον, αὐτεδίδου, οὐκ ὅπως τοῖς βουλευταῖς, ἀλλὰ καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις. (iii)

i. Ovid Fasti I. 185 - 194.

ii. Symmachus Epist. X. 28.

iii. Dio Cass. LIV. 35.

'Item Kal. Jan. strenuam in Capitolio etiam apsentī ex qua summa pretiosissima deorum simulacra mercatus vicatim dedicabat, (i) ut Apollinem Sandaliarum et Jovem Tragoedum aliosque'.

Augustus, with his usual prudence and generosity, either returned with additions, the sums presented to him, or used them for adorning the city of Rome with statues and temples. It would seem, from comparing the accounts, that he did the former when he was himself present personally to receive and personally to return the gifts, and the latter when he was absent from the city, and so could neither receive nor return the gifts in person. Two inscriptions are extant of the dedications on statues erected by Augustus with the money from the strenae:

"Laribus publicis sacrum Imperator Caesar Augustus
Pontifex Maximus Tribunic. Potestat. XVIII. ex stipe
quam populus ei contulit K. Januari apsentī."

Another on a marble base excavated in the Forum is as follows:-

"Imp. Caesar Divi F. Augustus Pontifex Maximus Imp.
XIII Cos: XI Trib: Potest: XV ex stipe quam populus (ii)
Romanus anno novo apsentī contulit."

Augustus, though he refrained from making personal profit out of the strenae, yet sanctioned the custom of making these gifts to the emperor. Tiberius, however, after having at first

i. Suetonius, Augustus 57.

ii. Mommsen Inscr: Regni Neapolitani 6764 and 6775.

surpassed the generosity of Augustus and returned what was given to him fourfold, found that the custom was tiresome and expensive, and forbade the presentation of the *strenae* to himself after the first day of the year, whereas formerly the crowds of donors had been so great that several days were spent in receiving them. 'He forbade expressly by edict the usuall and daily kisses commonly given and taken, likewise the intercourse of new years gifts (*strenarum commercium*) sent to and fro: namely that it should not continue after the Calends of Januarie. He had wont to bestow for his part a new years gift foure fold worth that which he received, and he gave the same with his own hand, but being offended that a whole month together he was in his other affaires troubled with such as had not beene with him, nor felt his liberalitee upon the verie feast hee never gave any againe after the saide day".⁽ⁱ⁾

ὁ δὲ Σὴ Τιβέριος ἐπειδὴ καὶ μετὰ τὴν νομηνίαν
τινὲς ἀργυρίον αὐτῷ προσήνεγκαν, οὕτε ἐδέξαντο
καὶ τι καὶ γράμμα περὶ αὐτοῦ τούτου ἐξέτετο"

Caligula on the other hand, with his customary mad greed for money, made full use of the opportunities afforded by the custom. He showed his appreciation of it and his desire for plentiful gifts by appearing in person in the vestibule of his palace to receive them.

i. Suetonius Tiberius 34. Holland's trans.

ii. Dio Cass. LVII. 17.

'Edidit et strenas ineunte anno se recepturum stetit que in vestibulo aedium Kal. Jan. ad captandas stipes quas plenis ante eum manibus ac sinu omnis generis turba fundebat'.⁽ⁱ⁾

Under Caligula the custom became an abuse, and therefore his successor Claudius abolished it, together with many other abuses that had arisen in financial matters.

καὶ μὲντοι καὶ περὶ τὰ χρήματα θαύματος ἐγένετο. Ἀπηγόρευσε μὲν γὰρ ἀργύριον (ὅπερ ἐπὶ τοῦ Ἀυγούστου καὶ ἐπὶ τοῦ Γαίου ἐγένετο) προσφέρειν, ἀπέτρεψε δὲ μηδὲ κληρονόμον αὐτὸν, ὅστις ἂν συγγενεῖς ὅποιους δὴ ποτε κέκτηται, καταλείπειν.ⁱⁱ

There is here a reference to another method, favoured by some emperors, of obtaining money apparently bestowed voluntarily, but really from sycophancy or a desire to gain the emperor's favour for, or avert his wrath from the benefactor's family: the custom of bequests to the emperor. This can scarcely be reckoned as a 'tax', but was another apparently voluntary enriching of the emperor, which was really the fruit of coercion or fear.

Although Claudius issued an edict suppressing the custom of giving strenae to the emperor, it was only temporarily checked. Later emperors were unable to resist having recourse to such an easy means of adding to their exchequer. We know that strenae were given to Commodus in some form or another by

i. Suetonius Caligula 42.

ii. Dio Cass. LX. 6.

by the specimen extant which bears his name. We can infer that from his time onwards at any rate the practice was continued, for, though there is a considerable space between our evidence at this point, we find it in full force and apparently regarded as a regular custom in the time of Symmachus, several of whose letters refer to it. The most important of these is that quoted above, which gives the history of the origin of the custom, and is worth quoting in full.

D.D.D. Valentiano Theodosio Arcadio semper Aug: Symmachus
U.C. Praef. urbis.

Ab exortu paene urbis Martiae strenarum usus adolevit, auctoritate Tatii regis, qui verbenas felicis arboris ex luco Streniae anni novi auspices primus accepit, D. D. imperatores. Nomen indicio est viris strenuis haec convenire ob virtutem: atque ideo vobis hujusmodi insigne deberi, quorum animus magis testimonium vigilantiae quam omen exspectat. Sumite igitur defensores publicae salutis solemner auro ducta manuscula: non quia divitiis metalli honore gaudetis, sed ut nostra devotio felicis saeculi testetur opulentiam bonis principibus bene parta libamus. Suscipite a iudicibus aperta obsequia, qui pretia occulta damnatis. Merito vobis solemnes pateras, cum quinis solidis, ut numinibus integritatis offerimus; quibus nec vester pudor nec noster census oneratur. Maneat aevum talis circa nos usus officii et honorem clementiae vestrae interminus annorum recursus instauret. Libenter strenis solemnibus

praefectura fungetur, strenuis deferendis.' (1)

From this letter we infer that it had become the custom for the senatorial and official class only to present strenae to the emperor, and no longer individually, but through their representative, the praefectus urbis. For Symmachus was at this time prefect of the city, and he here presents the strenae in the name of the senate (referring to it as 'nos' and 'noster') of which he was the official head. The strenae were, therefore, now, like the aurum oblatitium, a special burden of the senatorial class.

We also learn that the gift now took the form of bowls or dishes such as were used for sacrificial offerings, each containing five solidi, a solidus being a small gold coin (at first called aureus) and worth at this time rather over ten shillings. This was a change: in earlier times the strenae were given in the form of silver coins, the offering being always referred to as *ἀργύριον* in Dio Cassius.

Other evidence for the continuance of the custom under the later emperors is obtained from the law codes of Theodosius and Justinian.

In the Theodosian Code there is contained a law of Arcadius and Honorius, under the heading 'De Oblatione Votorum'. The law is as follows:-

"Quando votis communibus felix annus aperitur, in una libra auri solidi septuaginta duo abryziaci Principibus offerendi devotionem animo libenti suscipimus, statuantes ut deinceps

1. Symmachus, Epist. X. 35.

sequentibus annis unus cujusque sedulitas Principibus suis
 talia ingerant semper et deferant."⁽ⁱ⁾

Honorius here by this law sanctions the custom of strenae, but moderates the amount 'sic ut septuaginta duo solidi obryziaci pro una libra auri computarentur', as Godefroy explains in his commentary.

The heading of the law 'de oblatione votorum' shows that the other name for the offering of strenae was 'votorum oblatio', because it was offered at the same time as the prayers for the prosperity of the emperor at the beginning of the year 'quando votis communibus felix annus aperitur', and the gifts themselves as being intended to bring good luck, were also called vota.

The continuance of the custom in later times still, and after the extinction of the western empire, is shown by the fact that the law quoted above is repeated in the code of Justinian,ⁱⁱ and there is a reference to it as a custom extinct but remembered in a poem of Metellus, a Christian poet and German monk, who flourished in the tenth century A.D.

Strenae praeterea nitent

Plures auredae, munere regio,

Olim Principibus probis

Jani principiis auspicio datae,

Fausto temporis omine.

i. Cod. Theodos: VII. 24. 1. For solidi s. duo obryziaci we should probably read, as Godefroy suggests, solidos s. duos obryziacos, and take 'in una libra' to mean pro una libra.

ii Coll Just: XII. 49

Besides these contributions to the emperor's treasury, the aurum oblatitium and the strenae, the senators were called upon in times of distress to assist the people by other 'oblaciones', to which we find frequent references in the letters of Symmachus; as for example, during the revolt of Gildo, when the African corn ships ceased to come regularly and famine was feared, an oblatio of twenty days supplies was made by the senate.⁽ⁱ⁾

There are few surer signs of the financial weakness of the Roman empire than the fact that the treasury had to have recourse to the expedient of exacting voluntary offerings, such as have been described, to supply its own deficiencies.

i. Symmachus Ep. VI. 12, 26.

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